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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 BIB-01 /109 W
----------033423 121901Z /75
R 121417Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6994
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN POUCH
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON POUCH
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA POUCH
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY SEOUL POUCH
USICA WASHDC
USINT HAVANA
USLO PEKING
USUN NEW YORK 995

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1893

USICA FOR AR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, GY
SUBJECT: PNC WARNS GUYANESE JOURNALISTS

REF: GEORGETOWN 1679

BEGIN SUMMARY. ON JUNE 4 AND 5 THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA (GOG) HELD A SEMINAR ON THE ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA IN GUYANA. PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICERS AND SENIOR
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OFFICIALS FROM STATE CORPORATIONS, AND EMPLOYEES OF GUYANA'S TWO RADIO STATIONS AND GOG-OWNED NEWSPAPERS. THE SEMINAR WAS ONLY SELECTIVELY COVERED IN THE LOCAL PRESS. HOWEVER, A MEDIA SOURCE HAS PRIVATELY INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT THE MESSAGE OF THE SEMINAR WAS, IN EFFECT, "TOE THE PARTY LINE OR ELSE." END SUMMARY

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1. HIGHLIGHT OF THE MEDIA SEMINAR WAS THE OPENING ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM. THE PRIMIN STATED THAT THE PROPER ROLE OF THE MEDIA DURING THE TRANSITION FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM WAS TO FORM A DIRECT PUBLIC OPINION. BURNHAM SAID THAT EVEN UNDER SO-CALLED FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, REPORTERS REFLECTED THE IDEOLOGY OF THEIR BOSSES, AND WERE FREE ONLY WITHIN CERTAIN BOUNDARIES. HE CLAIMED THAT BOTH IN THE EAST AND THE WEST THE MEDIA SLANT THE NEWS FOR THEIR PARTICULAR ENDS. (IN THIS VEIN HE CHARGED THAT THE "CARIBBEAN CONTACT" NEWSPAPER WAS FINANCED BY THE CIA, AND THAT RADIO ANTILLES WAS AN AGENT OF THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT.)

2. BURNHAM CALLED FOR THE BETTER TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS, SO THAT THEY CAN UNDERSTAND THE PATH GUYANA IS TAKING, AS WELL AS THE IDEOLOGY THAT THE REPORTERS MUST SUPPORT IN THEIR REPORTING. THOSE JOURNALISTS WHO CAN NOT DO THEIR JOBS AS REQUIRED BY THE GOG AND THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) PARTY, HE WARNED, WOULD HAVE TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT ELSEWHERE.

3. BURNHAM CITED THE EXAMPLES OF "PRAVDA," "IZVESTIA," "TRUD." AND "GRANMA," AS REPRESENTING THE KINDS OF NEWS COVERAGE TO WHICH GUYANESE JOURNALISTS SHOULD ASPIRE AND INFORMED THE PARTICIPANTS THAT OPPOSITION SENTIMENTS WILL NO LONGER BE EXPRESSED IN GOG PRESS. IF NECES-
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SARY, THE GOG WOULD SUBSIDIZE THE MEDIA TO ASSIST IT IN ITS ROLE OF SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM. (COMMENT: ONE OF GUYANA'S TWO RADIO STATIONS IS PRIVATE-LY OWNED. IT HAS BEEN RUMORED FOR SOME TIME THAT THE STATION WAS LOSING MONEY DUE TO FALLING ADVERTISING REVE-NUES, AND WOULD BE TAKEN OVER BY THE GOG BY THE END OF THIS YEAR, PROVIDED MONEY CAN BE FOUND FOR ITS PURCHASE.)

4. DURING HIS REMARKS, BURNHAM ALSO TOLD THE AUDIENCE THAT IF THE REFERENDUM ON THE CONSTITUTION TO BE HELD ON JULY 10 DID NOT PASS, HE WOULD "IMMEDIATELY RESIGN". REFERRING TO THE PREDOMINATLY AFRICAN AND EAST INDIA ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF GUYANESE, BURNHAM TOLD THE PARTICPANTS TO REMEMBER THEIR ORIGIN AS SLAVES AND INDENTURED SERVANTS IN THEIR REPORTING. SOMEWHAT OMINOUSLY AND CRYPTICALLY BURNHAM WARNED THAT THE "MASSES" REMEMBER, AND THAT THEY "HAVE MATCHES."

5. THE PNC NEWSPAER, THE "NEW NATION," REPORTED THAT THE SEMINAR PASSED A RESOLUTION OF ALLEGIANCE TO BURNHAM, WHICH IN PART STATED "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS SEMINAR AFFIRM THEIR FULL ALLEGIANCE

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TO THE CDE. LEADER AND RECORD THEIR DEEP APPRECIATION OF
HIS EFFORTS IN PROVIDING LEADERSHIP TO THE MASS MEDIA
AND TO THE GUYANESE NATION."

6. COMMENT: AS REPORTED REFTEL, PRIMIN RE-EMPHASIZED
THAT THE LOCAL MEDIA WILL BE UNDER STRICTER GOVERNMENT
CONTROL. MEDIA PERSONNEL WHO CHAFE UNDER SUCH CONTROL OR
WHO FAIL TO CONFORM TO GOG GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES ON
NEWS COVERAGE OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS WILL BE
LEFT OUT IN THE COLD. IT SEEMS OBVIOUS FROM THIS SEMINAR
AND THE SESSION DESCRIBED REFTEL THAT WE CAN EXPECT FOR
THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE OT HAVE GREATER EMPHASIS ON NEWS
REPORTING IN SUPPORT OF GUYANA'S "SOCIALIST THRUST" AND
ACTIVITIES IN "FRIENDLY, PROGRESSIVE" COUNTRIES WITH A
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CORRESPONDING DOWNPLAYING OF NES FROM THE US, UK, CANADA,
AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE HISTORICALLY AND
TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE TO GUYANA. SIMILARLY, WE ENVISAGE AN EQUAL EFFORT
BY THE GOG TO DE-EMPHASIZE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL AND
OTHER TIES BETWEEN GUYANA AND THE WEST. THE ATTITUDE
WILL CONTINUE TO PREVAIL THAT GUYANA'S FUTURE POLITICAL
EVOLUTION WILL FOLLOW THE MODELS OF "FRIENDLY, PROGRESSIVE"
SOCIALIST COUNTRIES AND NOT THE DEMOCRACIES OF THE WEST.
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TAGS: PINS, SOPN, GY
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